

PRELIMINARY FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

ReBear Density Management and Watershed Restoration Project

Environmental Assessment Number OR-086-03-01

November 13, 2002

INTRODUCTION

The BLM (Bureau of Land Management) has conducted an environmental analysis (Environmental Assessment Number OR-086-03-01) for a proposal to perform a variable density management thinning on approximately 443 acres of 42- to 58-year old relatively dense, mixed Douglas-fir and western hemlock stands and to decommission approximately two and one-half miles of road within the Nestucca and Trask River watersheds. This project would occur within Township 3 South, Range 7 West, Sections 5, 7, 8, 11 and 12, Willamette Meridian.

Implementation of the proposed action would conform to management actions and direction contained in the ROD/RMP (*Salem District Record of Decision and Resource Management Plan*), dated May 1995, which is tiered to and incorporates the analysis contained in the RMP/FEIS (*Salem District Proposed Resource Management Plan /Final Environmental Impact Statement*), dated September 1994. The ROD/RMP provides a comprehensive ecosystem management strategy in conformance with the *Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement on Management of Habitat for Late-Successional and Old-Growth Related Species Within the Range of the Northern Spotted Owl* (February 1994) and the *Record of Decision for Amendments to Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management Planning Documents Within the Range of the Northern Spotted Owl and Standards and Guidelines for Management of Habitat for Late-Successional and Old-Growth Related Species Within the Range of the Northern Spotted Owl* (April 1994). The proposed action also conforms to the management direction contained in the *Record of Decision and Standards and Guidelines for Amendments to the Survey and Manage, Protection Buffer, and other Mitigation Measures Standards and Guidelines* (January 2001).

The EA (environmental assessment) is attached to and incorporated by reference in this preliminary FONSI (Finding of No Significant Impact) determination. *The EA and FONSI will be made available for public review from **November 20, 2002 to December 20, 2002.***

The notice for public comment will be published in a legal notice by local newspapers of general circulation (*Headlight Herald*); sent to those individuals, organizations, and agencies that have requested to be involved in the environmental planning and decision making processes; and posted on the Internet at <http://www.or.blm.gov/salem/html/planning/index.htm>. Comments received in the Tillamook Resource Area Office, 4610 Third Street, P.O. Box 404, Tillamook, Oregon 97141-0161, **on or before December 20, 2002 at 4:00 PM, Pacific Standard Time**, will

be considered in making the final decision for this project. Office hours are Monday through Friday, 7:30 A.M. to 4:00 P.M., closed on holidays.

Based upon the EA and supporting documents, the deciding official, Dana R. Shuford, Field Manager of the Tillamook Resource Area, made a preliminary determination that Alternative 1, hereafter referred to as the ~~A~~proposed action, is not a major federal action and will not significantly affect the quality of the human environment, individually or cumulatively with other actions in the general area. No environmental effects meet the definition of significance in context or intensity as defined in 40 CFR 1508.27. Therefore, an environmental impact statement is not needed. This finding is based on the following discussion:

Context. The proposed action is a site-specific action directly involving 443 acres of BLM administered land and two and one-half miles of BLM controlled road that by itself does not have international, national, region-wide, or state-wide importance. The project area falls within designated critical habitat of the marbled murrelet and the northern spotted owl and is within watersheds that contain Oregon coast coho salmon, all of which are listed as federally threatened under the ESA (Endangered Species Act). The discussion of the significance criteria that follows applies to the intended action and is within the context of local importance. Chapter 3 of the EA details the effects of the proposed action. None of the effects identified, including direct, indirect and cumulative effects, are considered to be significant and do not exceed those effects described in the RMP/FEIS.

Intensity. The following discussion is organized around the Ten Significance Criteria described in 40 CFR 1508.27.

1. **Impacts may be both beneficial and adverse.** Due to the proposed action's design features, the predicted effects, most noteworthy, include: 1/ acceleration of the development of some late-successional forest structural features on about 443 acres, including large trees, gaps in the canopy, snags and down wood, various levels of overstory tree densities, and various levels of understory development; 2/ enhancement of the overall level of diversity in the area; 3/ social and economic benefits to the local communities through the supply of approximately five and one-half million board feet of timber to local mills and some contract work associated with the road decommissioning portion of the project; 4/ restoration and maintenance of the ACS (Aquatic Conservation Strategy) objectives; 5/ no loss in population viability of special status or special attention species (also see significance criteria #9 below).

None of the environmental effects disclosed above and discussed in detail in Chapter 3 of the EA and associated appendices are considered significant, nor do the effects exceed those described in the RMP/FEIS.

2. **The degree to which the selected alternative will affect public health or safety.** Public health and safety were not identified as an issue. The proposed action is comparable to other density management and road decommissioning projects which have occurred within the Salem District with no unusual health or safety concerns.

3. **Unique characteristics of the geographic area such as proximity to historic or cultural resources, park lands, prime farm lands, wetlands, wild and scenic rivers, or ecologically critical areas.** There are no historic or cultural resources, park lands, prime farm lands, wild and scenic rivers, or wildernesses located within the project area (EA, Appendix 1).

The project area is located within the Adaptive Management Area, Riparian Reserve and Late Successional Reserve land use allocations, as identified in the RMP. The project area also falls within designated critical habitat of two wildlife species, as previously stated and *May Affect* critical habitat for the northern spotted owl. Activities associated with the proposed action are predicted to accelerate the development of some late-successional forest structural features, and will contribute to the attainment of ACS objectives. Additionally, the proposed action was determined to *May Affect, Not Likely to Adversely Affect* the Oregon coast coho salmon and the northern spotted owl; and *May Affect, Likely to Adversely Affect* the marbled murrelet. (Chapter 3 of the EA).

4. **The degree to which the effects on the quality of the human environment are likely to be highly controversial.** Extensive scoping of the proposed action resulted in only one comment letter. The comment letter essentially asked that the BLM consider effects of the proposed action on anadromous fish, particularly Oregon coast salmon, and to implement Best Management Practices to minimize effects to water quality. The design features of the proposed action incorporates those practices.

The effects of the proposed action on the quality of the human environment were adequately understood by the interdisciplinary team to provide an environmental analysis. A complete disclosure of the predicted effects of the proposed action is contained in Chapter 3 of the EA and associated appendices.

5. **The degree to which the possible effects on the human environment are highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks.** The proposed action is not unique or unusual. The BLM has experience implementing similar actions in similar areas and have found effects to be reasonably predictable. The environmental effects to the human environment are fully analyzed in the EA. There are no predicted effects on the human environment which are considered to be highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks.
6. **The degree to which the action may establish a precedent for future actions with significant effects or represents a decision in principle about a future consideration.** The proposed action does not set a precedent for future actions that may have significant effects, nor does it represent a decision in principle about a future consideration. The proposed action accelerates the development of some late-successional forest habitat characteristics on 443 acres of land managed by the BLM and decommissions

approximately two and one-half miles of road no longer needed by the BLM. Any future projects will be evaluated through the NEPA (National Environmental Policy Act) process and will stand on their own as to environmental effects.

7. **Whether the action is related to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant impacts.** The interdisciplinary team evaluated the proposed action in context of past, present and reasonably foreseeable actions. Significant cumulative effects are not predicted. A complete disclosure of the effects of the selected alternative is contained in Chapter 3 of the EA.
8. **The degree to which the action may adversely affect districts, sites, highways, structures, or other objects listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places or may cause loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural, or historical resources.** The proposed action will not adversely affect districts, sites, highways, structures, or other objects listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places, nor will the proposed action cause loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural, or historical resources (EA, Appendix 1).
9. The degree to which the action may adversely affect an endangered or threatened species or its habitat that has been determined to be critical under the Endangered Species Act of 1973. Regarding ESA Section 7 consultation with NOAA Fisheries, a Biological Assessment for the proposed density management project will be prepared and submitted to the North Coast Province Level I Team in the February 2003 quarterly meeting in accordance with the Streamlined Consultation process. A determination that the project *May Affect, Not Likely to Adversely Affect* the Oregon coast coho salmon has been reached by BLM biologists and through conferencing with NOAA Fisheries, the BLM will be seeking a letter of concurrence on that finding.

Section 7 consultation with USFWS (United States Fish and Wildlife Service) has been completed programmatically (USFWS Biological Opinion 1-7-02-F-958, dated September 30, 2002). The design features of the proposed action are consistent with the definitions for *light to moderate thinning* found in the USFWS' Biological Opinion. See Chapter 3 of the EA for the details of the ESA effect findings for the marbled murrelet, northern spotted owl, and bald eagle.

10. **Whether the action threatens a violation of Federal, State, or local law or requirements imposed for the protection of the environment.** The proposed action does not violate any known Federal, State, or local law or requirement imposed for the protection of the environment. The EA and supporting Project Record contain discussions pertaining to the Endangered Species Act, National Historic Preservation Act, Clean Water Act, Clean Air Act, Coastal Zone Management Act, and Executive

Order 12898 (Environmental Justice). State, local, and tribal interests were given the opportunity to participate in the environmental analysis process. Furthermore, the proposed action alternative is consistent with applicable land management plans, policies, and programs.